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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of analytic corrections and revisions on college composition students working in a portfolio assessment setting. Subjects were 19 community college students enrolled in a transfer-level class in composition. Three of these students were from the English as a Second Language/immigrant/refugee population. Students were assigned in-class and at-home essays and mid-term and final portfolio assessments. Data were the in-class essay grades, the at-home essay grades, the final portfolio assessment, and a survey students completed at the end of the quarter. Seventeen of the 19 students passed the final portfolio evaluation and the class. Many students noted that the constant analytic grading helped them become better writers, but others wrote about their concerns in not understanding all of their errors, of finding some instructor inconsistency in grading, and of not liking the grading system. Results indicate that the analytic corrections helped students prepare for the mid-term and final evaluations by unknown instructors, even though some students did not understand the corrections fully. An attachment contains the student survey responses. (SLD)

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The Effects of Analytic Corrections and Revisions on College Composition Students in a Portfolio Assessment Setting

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The Effects of Analytic Correction and Revision on Student College Compositions

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The Effects of Analytic Corrections and Revisions on College Composition Students in a Portfolio Assessment Setting

Objective

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of analytic corrections and revisions on college composition students working in a portfolio assessment setting.

Theoretical Framework

Current researchers in writing assessment have explored the use of the holistic grading method versus the analytic method to assess student essays. Some researchers report that the analytic method, which notes every error, can be discouraging to students and time-consuming for teachers (Hairston, 1986; Larson, 1986; Madsen, 1983). Other researchers are concerned that the holistic scoring method presents its own set of difficulties (Hout, 1996). Haswell and Wyche-Smith (1994) discuss evidence that holistic grading can be harsher in placing students than analytic methods. White (1990) concludes that holistic scoring should not be the only measure of writing. Murray (1968) offers writing teachers a range of advice, from not correcting every error so that students are not overwhelmed, to correcting every error so that students are not careless.

In addition, researchers are exploring the use of portfolio assessment of student writing. Using holistic scoring, some instructors may fail a student's portfolio because of lack of grammatical and semantic control, lack of thoughtful development, and lack of sufficient detail (Roemer, 1991). Haswell and Wyche-Smith (1994) are concerned that holistic scoring is product-centered, comparing a student's writing to an ideal performance outlined in a rubric. White (1990) makes the point that holistic scoring is a blending of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing, both ranking student essays and using a rubric for criteria.

In order to explore the above research findings and concerns, the analytic scoring method was used by an instructor in a community college just beginning a new portfolio assessment project. The instructor selected the analytic method, along with a scoring rubric, as a way to quickly adjust the students to the high expectations of the portfolio committee. The focus was on organization, development, and mechanics.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were nineteen community college students enrolled in English 101, a transfer-level class in writing college-level compositions. Three of the students were from the ESL immigrant/refugee population: one from South America, and the other two from Ukraine. They all had the shared goal of wanting to pass English 101 in one quarter.

Procedure. At the beginning of the quarter, the students were given a grade sheet which outlined the number of essays due and grading procedures for the quarter. The instructor then reviewed the difference between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing and grading, and explained that the grading would follow criterion-referenced testing. In addition, the students received a sample scoring rubric and an analytic error inventory which would be used to grade their essays. Finally, the students were informed that they were part of a department-wide experiment in portfolio assessment being piloted that quarter. All English 101 students were to read H.G. Wells' novel *The Time Machine*, which would form the basis for their mid-term and final portfolio assessment. This portfolio would be graded by other instructors in the English Department. The following assignments were given to the students:

1. In-Class Timed Essays
2. At-Home Essays (Out of Class)
3. Mid-term and Final Portfolio Assessments

1. In-Class Timed Essays. The students wrote six in-class timed essays. The students were given two hours for each essay, except for the final portfolio essay to be assessed by other instructors. The students had three hours for this final essay. The students were allowed to keep the best two in-class essay grades. In order to receive at least a 2.0 in the class, one of the criteria was the students needed to receive at least a 2.0, a passing grade, on two of these in-class timed writes. There could be no revisions or grade changes on the in-class essays in order to ensure that the students were the authors of the essays, and to get an idea of what the students could do under pressure. The students received their essays graded on two levels: form, including organization and development; and mechanics. Every error was marked so that students could decide for themselves which errors they wanted to tackle first.

2. At-Home Essays. The students were assigned three major at-home essays. These essays came with flexible due dates: usually the students were given directions that the essays could be turned in during a specific week, not on a specific day. Late at-home essays were assigned a 0.0 grade, unless the student discussed the late paper with the teacher. Students were encouraged to work with their own schedule in planning their essays. The instructor marked the essay criteria sheet, marked every error, and returned the at-home essay to the students. They were encouraged to revise the essay, stapling the revision on top of the original essay so that the instructor could check progress. No more than three revisions were accepted. The first two at-home essay grades could be revised to a 4.0. The last at-home essay could only be revised for ten points, in order to avoid student reliance on the instructor as editor.

3. The Midterm and Final Portfolio. The English Department, in implementing a portfolio assessment, asked that the instructors turn in the students' portfolios twice. The first midterm portfolio assessment was to include an in-class timed write of the instructor's choosing as well as an out of class (at-home) MLA format essay based on an outside piece of writing: The students were to cite text sources and demonstrate a proficiency in MLA documentation. The final portfolio would only include a three-day timed write on *The Time Machine,* which included MLA documentation skills.

Data Sources. There were four major data sources in the study. The first was the in-class essay grades, which document the students' ability in organization, development, and mechanics. The second major data source was the at-home essay grades, again documenting the students' ability in organization, development, and mechanics, but also demonstrating their ability to recognize, analyze, understand, and correct their own error. The third data source was the final portfolio evaluation, done by other instructors in the department. The fourth data source was a survey the students completed at the end of the quarter, as they sat in class with their complete portfolio of both in-class and at-home assignment. The students noted the number of drafts they wrote for each essay; completed a rubric, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, of their feelings about the grading system, the revision process, the constant correction of errors, their understanding of corrections and correction symbols, and their feelings of how much they benefited from the corrections and criteria sheets; and then answered general questions along the same lines as the rubric.

Analysis of Results. Of the nineteen students in this English 101 class, seventeen students passed the Final Portfolio Evaluation and also passed the class with a 2.0 or higher. Overall, using the mean average, here are the results from the eighteen students completing the survey rubric (1-5):

Did they understand the grading system?	(4.2)
Did they find the revision process beneficial?	(4.6)
Did they like the constant correction of errors?	(4.1)
Did they understand the corrections and symbols?	(3.8)
Did they feel that they benefited from the corrections?	(4.4)
Did they feel that the criteria sheets helped them?	(4.1)

In the written comments, many students noted that the constant analytic grading helped them become better writers; however, other students wrote about their concerns of not completely understanding all their errors, of finding some instructor inconsistency of grading, and of not liking the grading system. Thus, the study found that analytic corrections could help students of varying abilities quickly become prepared for a mid-term and final portfolio evaluation by other, unknown instructors. However, the study also finds that not all students like or completely understand the analytic corrections. In addition, the students who did like the analytic corrections may have been responding to the energy that the instructor has to put into this labor-intensive correction method. Further investigation and study must occur before conclusions may be drawn about the effectiveness of the analytic correction method.

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In-Class Essay Grades: English 101 Spring 1999 **N = 19**

(No revisions are possible to change In-Class Essay Grades, but low grades may be dropped)

	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6 (optional)
MEAN	1.97	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.46
MEDIAN	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.5
MODE	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9/3.0
RANGE	.9	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.1
1.	2.8	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.0
2.	2.5	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.0
3.	1.9	3.2	3.4	3.0	2.8
4.	1.9	2.9	3.1	2.9	2.6
5.	1.9	1.9	2.9	2.5	2.4
6.	1.9	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.1
7.	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.0	1.9
8.	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9
9.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
10.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
11.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
12.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
13.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
14.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
15.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
16.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
17.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
18.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	
19.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	

At-Home Essay Grades: English 101 Spring 1999 **N = 19**

(Can be fully revised for 4.0) (Can be revised for 10 points)

	#1	#2	#3
MEAN	3.85	3.1	2.76
MEDIAN	4.0	3.5	2.9
MODE	4.0	4.0	2.9
RANGE	1.7	2.1	4.0
1.	4.0	4.0	4.0
2.	4.0	4.0	4.0
3.	4.0	4.0	3.8
4.	4.0	4.0	3.8
5.	4.0	4.0	3.3
6.	4.0	4.0	3.2
7.	4.0	3.8	2.9
8.	4.0	3.5	2.9
9.	4.0	3.5	2.9
10.	4.0	3.5	2.9
11.	4.0	3.5	2.9
12.	4.0	3.4	2.9
13.	4.0	2.3	2.9
14.	4.0	2.2	2.6
15.	4.0	1.9	1.9
16.	4.0	1.9	1.9
17.	4.0	1.9	1.9
18.	3.0	1.9	1.9
19.	2.3	1.9	0.0

Student Responses:
Survey on the Effects of Analytic Correction and Revision
on Student Essays

Part One: How many drafts did you do for each essay?
(Student responses are reported in the same order for each question)

At-Home #1:
3, 3, 5, 3, 4, 2, (no answer), 3, 3, 3, 3, 4, revised 3 times, 1, (no answer), 5 rough drafts, 3, 3

At-Home #2:
3, 3, 3, 2, 2, 3, (no answer), 2, 3, 3, 5, 2, revised 3 times, 3, (no answer), 4 rough drafts, 2, 3

At-Home #3:
2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, (no answer), 3, 2, 2, 2, 3, revised 2 times, 2, (no answer), 2 rough drafts, 2, 2

In-Class #1:
1, 2, 5, 1, 1, 2, (no answer), 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, rough final, 1, (no answer), once, 3 drafts, 2

In-Class #2:
3, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, (no answer), 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, rough final, 2, (no answer), once, 1, 1

In-Class #3:
1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, (no answer), 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, rough final, 2, (no answer), once, 2, 2

In-Class #4:
2, (no answer), 2, (no answer), 1, 1, (no answer), 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, (no answer), 2, (no answer), once, 2, (no answer)

In-Class #5:
1, (no answer), (no answer), (no answer), (no answer), 1, (no answer), (no answer), 1, 1, (no answer), 2, (no answer), 1, (no answer), once, 1, (no answer)

Exit Exam:
1, (no answer), 1, 1, 1, 1, (no answer), 1, (no answer), (no answer), 2, (no answer), rough final, 1, (no answer), once, 1, 1

In-Class #6 (optional):
1, (no answer), (no answer), (no answer), (no answer), 1, (no answer), (no answer), 1, 1, 1, 2, (no answer), (no answer), (no answer), (no answer), (no answer), (no answer)

Part Two: With 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, please circle the number which best sums up your opinion. You may add comments if you wish, on the back of this page.
(Student responses are reported in the same order for each question.
Mean average is given after each question.)

1. Did you understand the grading system? **(4.2)**

5, 5, 2, 5, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 1, 4, 5, 3

2. Was the revision process for At-Home essays beneficial? **(4.6)**

5, 5, 2, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 3, 5, 5, 5

3. Did you like the constant correction of errors? **(4.1)**

5, 5, 3, 5, 4, 5, 5, 5, 3, 4, 4, 1-wasn't consistent, 5, 3, 3, 5, 4, 5

4. Did you understand the corrections and symbols? **(3.8)**

4, 4-sometimes not, 4, 5, 4, 5, 5, 5, 3, 3, 4, 2-sometimes, 5, 5, 3, 4, 4, 1-understood a couple

5. Did you benefit from the corrections? **(4.4)**

5, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 3, 5, 4, 5

6. Did the criteria sheet help you? **(4.1)**

5, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 3, 5, 5, 4, 4, 1-needs to be explained better, 5, 5, 4, 5, 4, 1

Overall Mean Average: **(4.2)**

Part Three: Free Answers
(As much as possible, typed the way the student wrote).

Question 1: What sort of errors did you make on the drafts?

1. comma spices, fragments, parallism, miss use of commas, semi colons
2. comma errors were the most frequent. Confusing words like than/then was another. One paper had several frags
3. run ons, verbs, commas. . .
4. commas
5. I didn't have no specific evidence and past partiple
6. fragment, and comma errors
7. A lot
8. grammer and spelling
9. mostly commas and a few spelling
10. At first alot of fragments and just stupid errors
11. giving specific examples
12. Simple wrong uses of words
13. spelling,
14. unnecessary commas, maybe a few sentence frags via comma splice.
15. I put commas to often, trouble with dependant and independent clauses.
16. puncuation and spelling
17. verbs, commas,
18. commas, problem with indirective sentences

Question 2: Did you understand why they were errors?

1. yes
2. Yes, but restrictive and non-restrictive cause me some confusion.
3. yes
4. yes
5. yes
6. yes
7. Yeah
8. yes
9. yes
10. yes
11. yes
12. yes
13. yes
14. Yes, but I always found myself making the same mistakes over & over, completely mindless!
15. not really
16. Yes for the most part
17. Yes
18. yes—eventually

Question 3: How did you correct these errors? If you didn't correct them, why not?

1. I looked in the Rules of Writers book, looked up the terms & tried to understand my mistakes. Then I revised my paper.
2. I would talk to Ms. Boyden [Ms. Knudsen], then look up the errors in my book, most were due to lack of my attention to the sentence. Then I rewrote
3. Yes
4. I read what I missed in the blue book and then corrected them
5. I paid more attention to what I wrote.
6. Looked at my book, Sat down with the teacher and she helped me understand.
7. With magic
8. whatching my past work, I learned from my past errors.
9. they were easy to correct I had just had to change a few words and add some thing
10. I took what was said on the crierea sheets and the markings on my drafts and changed them, mainly looking in the style guide
11. I had to read the directions more carefully
12. Look extra hard in my book Yes.
13. When I turned in the essay, I got it back and made the changes.
14. The At-Home essays were fairly simple, because I could see the whole paper at once, very clearly . . . . because of the length of the in-classes, this was difficult, although I usually corrected mistake
15. put the right words and puntuation into essays
16. I fix the puncuation and spelling some of the conections I didn't make was because the computer didn't save things properly.
17. I tried to understand first why it is mistake and then I corrected
18. read the book and understood why they were wrong

Question 4: How did you feel about the grading system?

1. It was really tough but effective. It really put pressure on me to do my best.
2. I did not mind it. I appreciated extra credit for attendance, that is what gave me 4.0
3. I am not understand for sure
4. I thought it was great
5. I felt it was a good grading system.
6. good
7. I heartedly dislike it.
8. o.k.
9. It was hard because I felt she was a little picky on some things.
10. I liked it, very objective.
11. I really liked it. It allowed me to get a better grade.
12. ok.
13. I liked how I was able to bring up my grades on the paper
14. At first I thought it was severe, i.e., cruel & unusual, but later I saw that it was fair
15. I didn't really like it, but it was okay
16. the grading system was very fair
17. Strict, but useful to be a better student
18. It felt like I was going to fail every paper with so many ways to deduct points.

Question 5: Did you revise any or all of your At-Home essays for a higher grade?

1. Yes, all of them
2. I revised all of them for the higher grade.
3. Yes.
4. I revised all of my At-Home Essays
5. Yes I revise some.
6. yes
7. No comment
8. Yes
9. All but 1 because it got slaughtered and I didn't have time to completely rewrite it.
10. Yes
11. I revised all of them
12. Yes
13. All of my At-Homes
14. I revised all of them to 4.0's.
15. yes
16. I revised all of my at home essays for a higher grade
17. Yes
18. yes

Question 6: If you didn't revise any or all [essays], why not?
If you didn't get a higher grade, why not?

1. (blank)
2. Sometimes my revised papers would be marked with errors that were not caught by the teacher the first time—so they were marked wrong the next time through.
3. (blank)
4. (blank)
5. I didn't revise because I did the paper totally wrong and I was stressed out.
6. (blank)
7. No comment
8. (blank)
9. (arrow pointing to #5)
10. (blank)
11. (blank)
12. In consistent grading
13. I revised all
14. (blank)
15. (blank)
16. (blank)
17. I revised all of them
18. n/a

Question 7: Did you learn anything through the revision process?

1. Yes, I learned what I did wrong.
2. It helped me with comma rules. I also believe that it helped me write better papers.
3. Yes, a lot
4. Yes I learned from my mistakes
5. Yes, what I did wrong.
6. yes
7. Yeah
8. Yes, check the work before I turn it in
9. Yes, I understood why I was marked off and got a little better at writing things that made more sense
10. I learned to write at my level and how to make my writing easier to read.
11. I tried to
12. Yes
13. I learned not to make the same mistake.
14. Of course! My mistakes gradually became specific, so I had to be more aware of what makes a mistake . . . . .i.e. what not to do
15. Yes, I learned about my strong and weakest points in the writing process
16. Yes, the revisions helped me improve my puncuation
17. Yes it helped to remember and do not do the same mistakes
18. Yes

Question 8: Did you learn anything in the class?

1. In the class itself . . . .I learned to write better.
2. I learned MLA Format, I learned a lot about commas. I also learned about some of the history of english.
3. Yes, to much.
4. The correct use of grammer
5. Yes I learned about MLA format.
6. Yes, with doing many in-classes, I learn from all my mistakes
7. Yeah
8. Yes, How develop and story.
9. Yes, I learned that I couldn't write as well as I thought and that High School doesn't teach you enough.
10. I learned how to write and write effectively.
11. I learned how to set up a paper with transitions.
12. Yes
13. I learned how to write strong essays.
14. The classification essay helped me structure my ideas better. I have a better idea of what types of mistakes I have now! This will help when I have to write a dissertation.
15. Yes, I learned how to write, using MLA Format.
16. Yes, I learened how to structure my essays and I improved on my puncuation. My spelling also improved a little
17. Yes this class helped me in grammer
18. Yes

Question 9: Any other comments?

1. It was a really tough class focusing hard on the MLA format . . . .but it was a good challenge.
2.
3. Thank you any way
5.
6.
7.
8.
9. Maybe
10. Thank God I passed!!!
11. –Nope
12.
13.
14. non
15.
16.
17.
18.

Survey on the Effects of Analytic Correction and Revision on Student Essays

Part One: How many drafts did you do for each essay?

At-Home #1	In-Class #1	In-Class #4
At-Home #2	In-Class #2	In-Class #5
At-Home #3	In-Class #3	In-Class #6
	Exit Exam	(optional)

Part Two: With 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, please circle the number which best sums up your opinion. You may add comments if you wish, on the back of this page.

1.	Did you understand the grading system?	1 2 3 4 5
2.	Was the revision process for At-Home essays beneficial?	1 2 3 4 5
3.	Did you like the constant correction of errors?	1 2 3 4 5
4.	Did you understand the corrections and symbols?	1 2 3 4 5
5.	Did you benefit from the corrections?	1 2 3 4 5
6.	Did the criteria sheets help you?	1 2 3 4 5

Part Three: Free Answers

1. What sort of errors did you make on the drafts?

2. Did you understand why they were errors?

3. How did you correct these errors? If you didn't correct them, why not?

4. How did you feel about the grading system?

5. Did you revise any or all of your At-Home essays for a higher grade?

6. If you didn't revise any or all, why not? If you didn't get a higher grade, why not?

7. Did you learn anything through the revision process?

8. Did you learn anything in the class?

9. Any other comments?